



# *Enchanted Cigarettes*

*Stephen Chalmers*

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## **Books by Stephen Chalmers**

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ENCHANTED CIGARETTES, OR, STEVENSON STORIES THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN. Illustrated.

THE PENNY PIPER OF SARANAC, AN EPISODE IN STEVENSON'S LIFE. Illustrated.

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN, EDWARD LIVINGSTON TRUDEAU. Illustrated.

*Enchanted Cigarettes*

OR STEVENSON STORIES THAT  
MIGHT HAVE BEEN







“LO, BY THE HEARTH, THE LAUGHTER OF THE LOGS”



# ENCHANTED CIGARETTES

OR

STEVENSON STORIES  
THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

BY

STEPHEN CHALMERS

*With Illustrations*



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### *Note*

“Enchanted Cigarettes” was read before the Stevenson Society at its first annual meeting held at Saranac Lake, New York, October 28, 1916. The illustrations are reproduced by courtesy of the Stevenson Society. The designs on the cover and the title-page, and that used as a headpiece for the first page of text, are from a series of eighteen wood engravings made by Stevenson himself, of which but six sets of proofs have been preserved. I am indebted to “The New York Times Review of Books” for permission to reprint the verses entitled “Friend o’ Mine.”

S. C.

765171



## *Friend o' Mine*

*When first I met you, you were dead, while I  
Had scarce begun to live. And where we met  
Was on some ringing isle whose emerald shores  
Upon an opal sea, reef-clutched, were set.*

*You were a man while I was yet a boy ;  
But, friend o' mine, were we not boys together?  
Did we not jeer the gales at Stornaway  
And make the Sound o' Mull in stormy weather?*

*Did we not watch the sea-gull dare the foam,  
Dip to the wave, fleck it, and scream its scorn?  
Did you not say, " There goes a sailor's wraith!  
Where was he drowned? I'll wager — off  
the Horn!"*

*In boyish dreams did we not often view  
The sea-bewn cave as where a baresark leered—  
Long-haired and gaunt and foaming at the mouth,  
Grinding his teeth till blood ran down his  
beard?*

## *Friend o' Mine*

*Did we not tread the snowbound wilderness,  
    Bearing in turn our common sorrow's pack?  
Did we not hear the grinding mills of God,  
    And make that wintry camp by Saranac?*

*Did we not watch the South Sea palms at dusk?  
    By morn, at sea, the flying-fish at play?  
Did we not swear again that we were friends  
    As from our sheering coppers burst the spray?*

*And had we not a circle of strange friends, —  
    Rough seaman, polished prince, and tattered  
    tramp?  
Ah, in those days, what stirring tales we passed  
    By galley fire, peat hearth, and gypsy camp!*

*Aye, we were boys together — comrades still!  
    In the glamorous hours of dusk that (you know)  
    lend  
Fine dreams to finer fellows — Here's my hand,  
    Mine own, familiar friend!*

*Enchanted Cigarettes*







## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

OR

STEVENSON STORIES THAT MIGHT  
HAVE BEEN

SOME time ago I read in "The Bookman," or "The Nation," a short editorial on the subject of enchanted cigarettes. This was a term Balzac employed in "Cousine Bette" as descriptive of artistic things dreamed, or planned, but never executed.

[ 3 ]

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

Dream-children, you might say ; in some cases still-born, but usually left to roam in that state of perfection which is supposed to exist in the airy habitation 'twixt Heaven and Earth.

All of us, in whatever sphere of usefulness we move, are parent to those dream-children. We continue to hope that they will arrive in some material port of ours some day — when the ship of dreams comes home. We are all, more or less, smokers of enchanted cigarettes.

To the literary man — I mean the man who creates images in words — the term relates exclusively to those unwritten masterpieces which have

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

never found birth ; and the mere fact of their still being in the realm of fancy argues them perfect. Every man who writes will tell you, if he is in a confiding mood, that his best is still unwritten.

Even that past-master of letters, the late Andrew Lang, confessed to having a brand of his own and that his particular tray was piled with the ash of many a delicate fabric — dreamships that arose on the horizon of reverie and disappeared in the winking of the eyes. In his “Adventures Among Books” the great Andrew includes a dainty essay on this same subject. In those reminiscences of

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

“such stuff as dreams are made on” he speaks of a novel he was to have written with a very great novelist. The writer in “The Nation”—I think it *was* “The Nation”—wondered if this “very great novelist” might be Robert Louis Stevenson.

Quite possibly; quite probably. Lang and R. L. S. were continually exchanging ideas about plots. Lang it was who suggested the nucleus idea for “The Young Chevalier,” a novel which Stevenson brilliantly commenced and never finished. And one can think of no more likely companion in the smoking of the stuff that “imagination bodies forth” than

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

this whimsical enchanter, whose material cigarette ends so often burned holes in the mantelpiece at Saranac Lake.

Therefore, I would present for consideration a hitherto unpublished list of the novels and tales of Robert Louis Stevenson which he never wrote, with the approximate time and place when and where he did not write them : —

The Indian Mutiny, Saranac Lake, 1888.

Canonmills, probably Saranac Lake, 1888.

The Rising Sun, at Sea (Pacific) 1890.

Dyce of Ythan, Samoa, 1892.

The Shovels of Newton French, Samoa,  
1892.

The Beach-Combers, Samoa, 1893.

Sophia Scarlet, Samoa, 1893.

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

The Owl, Samoa, 1893.

Death in the Pot, Samoa, 1893.

The Sleeper Awakened, Samoa, 1893.

To these one might add a non-fiction list : —

A Biography of the Duke of Wellington.

A Biography of Hazlitt.

A History of the Indian Mutiny.

An English Grammar, to be illustrated by Examples from the English Classics.

Two of these were, I think, early indiscretions.

In some cases we find enchanted cigarettes which, for one reason or another, were but half consumed. These are the half-burned ends which we find in his ash-tray : —

The Great North Road, Bournemouth, 1884.

The Young Chevalier, Samoa, 1893.

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

Heathercat, Samoa, 1893.

The Go-Between, Samoa, 1893.

St. Ives, Samoa, 1894.

Weir of Hermiston, Samoa, 1894.

It would be easy to enlarge upon what these tales were to have been ; how they were to end. They are left to tantalize us, as do the armless Venus and the headless Victory. To a certain extent speculation shall be necessary ; but personally I would emulate that young man in “ The Wrecker ” who made a tremendous hit with a bored San Francisco audience by turning over a few pages in a lecture he was reading and saying, “ You see, I am cutting this thing as short as I can ! ”

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

But nothing could be more fitting than to note a fact hitherto (I think) disregarded or altogether unregarded; the fact that the turning-point in Stevenson's life took place at Saranac Lake, so far as literary productiveness and, I would almost say, his joy of very existence are concerned. Here, the man who had been laboriously producing literature in the intervals of dodging death, suddenly turned and gripped life, danced with life to every measure its pipes could invent.

It has always seemed to me, from a close study of his history, that from the moment on the veranda of that Adirondack cottage when he cried to



## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

his engine, which was racing with a strange, new vigor, "Come, let us make a tale!" he turned down the page of his physical and mental past, became a new man and, like the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, took up his bed and walked !

No more exploiting of sickness and mortality! — ills that he unconsciously advertised while he wrote of them with philosophic, almost cheerful, acquiescence. No more of the sweet, plaintive minor. Although a certain prayer of his was not written until years later, I feel it was but a deferred utterance born of his transfiguration — like that of the Princess Seraphina

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

in "Prince Otto" after that lost night in the pine forest. "Oh, it is the dawn!" she cried. "Help us to play the man!" wrote he who walked that night under the Adirondack stars.

Even Stevenson's most devoted worshipers must feel that up to about the year 1888 much of the picturesque attaching to his personality and writings was due to the darkly romantic picture of a man of genius who wrote with death holding the ink-well.

"Much of Antony," wrote his friend Henley, "of Hamlet most of all." But, as Lloyd Osbourne tells us, Stevenson would have been the last

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

man to assume a pose, such as he hated and derided in others. The fact remains, however, that he was a sick man, that (he wrote of dark things most cheerfully ; and the public liked the picture and insisted, for its morbid gratification, in exploiting it ; just as it gloats over the personal tragedy of Poe to the neglect of what he gave to us ; just as it does to-day when it hoists to a pedestal some poet whose genius was overlooked until he committed suicide or was shot, say, in a Belgian trench. How Poe must smile ; how Rupert Brooke must smile ; and possibly at this moment Stevenson is smiling, too !

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

Yet — he *was* a sick man. Until that wonderful night of stars when he heard the ice contending with the boulders below the cottage at Saranac Lake, his writings — his essays in particular — breathed an invalid atmosphere. His fame as a writer of fiction really came with “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” and what was that but, upon his own confession, the outcome of a “lovely bogey dream”? Before that he had uttered such unhappy fancies as “The Body-Snatcher” and “Olalla,” the latter of which treats of a family of vampire degenerates.

“Treasure Island”? In a hilarious moment he wrote this to please a lad

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

in his household. He wrote it "exactly in the ancient way," as he admits, and remorselessly scuttled tall books for his material. The success of "Treasure Island" is due to the fact that we all, and always, love that sort of a story, but in this case it was a master of language and style who took a holiday to himself and wrote it.

"The Merry Men," too, with its horror of the sea wherein only cold-blooded things live, is but further evidence against the goblin that attended the sick man's fancies. And putting aside "Prince Otto" as an admirable mental feat on a subject that was not of physical experience, it has often

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

seemed to me that even in “Kidnapped” (rated among the best of his fiction) the sufferings of David Balfour — his sickness on the Isle of Earraid, his weariness in the flight with Alan Breck, his timid fears at every turn — are but vivid reflections of the haunting physical weakness that was within Stevenson himself at the time he wrote it. The ghoul was ever at his elbow ; and we can sympathize ; for who of us in periods of sickness has not dreamed the night long of a world full of nothing but trouble, pain of body, weariness of soul?

These were fine works ; none criticizes ; rather do we thank God that

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

once they were given us, a new life of body, and consequently of spirit, fell to the lot of the beloved R.L.S., that henceforth, after that night when he bathed his body and spirit in the air that was sweet with the purity of forests, the magic weeds he smoked brought no longer enchanted castles of ogres, corpses, and evil natures, but visions of life and adventure by land and by sea, on the peaks of fancy and in the gloaming valleys of calm, deep philosophy.

It was at Bournemouth in 1884 that his habitual use of charmed tobacco began, although in adolescent years he had experimented much

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

with the airy weed.\* The first great result, out of the tendrils of hovering smoke, was "The Great North Road" and — a highwayman! Graham Balfour, I think it was, tells us that it had always been Louis's ambition to write about a highwayman — if he could

\* Men are born with various manias: from my earliest childhood it was mine to make a play-thing of imaginary series of events; and as soon as I was able to write, I became a good friend to the paper-makers. Reams upon reams must have gone to the making of "Rathillet," the "Pentland Rising" (not the slim green pamphlet, but its predecessor, a bulky historical romance now deleted from the world), the "King's Pardon" (otherwise "Park Whitehead"), "Edward Darren," "A Country Dance," and a "Vendetta in the West"; and it is consolatory to know that these reams are now ashes. . . . *My First Book* — "Treasure Island."



## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

not be one himself. But what happened to that story indicates the change that was coming upon Stevenson. He began that story as he began "Treasure Island" — half in fun, but this time with an eye to the coin. The first few chapters went along nicely. Here was the sort of thing everybody loves to read about — an old inn, mysterious visitors, the broad highway of a frosty morning, the tootling of the stagecoach horn, the ostler boys, mulled ale, and red noses.

But suddenly, R. L. S. stuck. Without knowing it, perhaps, he was no longer able to take a holiday from himself. He had outgrown the days

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

of "Treasure Island" and "The Black Arrow." As "The Great North Road" developed, big things began to pop up and demand recognition. There was, for instance, a girl called Nance Holdaway who outgrew her literary father. She was suddenly a bigger woman than his knowledge of women went at this time. He had not yet gone to Saranac Lake, met Mrs. George A. Custer, and had her draw attention to the shortcomings of the Stevenson woman in fiction.

But three years later he went to Saranac Lake and met Mrs. Custer. You may remember that, after being quizzed by her (at a dinner party)

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

about the absence of real women from his books, R. L. S. promised there should be one in his next book. This happened to be "The Master of Ballantrae"; and we all know what a fizzle the heroine is in that novel. She is either upstage and mute, or when downcentre and Stevenson does not know how to make her talk like a female of the species, she rushes off stage in a burst of tears.

And here is another thing that marks the revolution within Stevenson about this time. With the acquisition of health and the come-said-I-to-my-engine spirit, he determined that he should also master the subject

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

of women. Five years later — and mark this! — we find his publishers making frantic signals across the Pacific, begging him to be careful if he can't be good. Anent those signals Louis writes to his friend Colvin: "I can't mean one thing and write another. As for women, I am no more in fear of any of them." And again: "This is a poison bad world for the romancer, this Anglo-Saxon world. I usually get out of it by not having any women (in the story) at all."

However — it was on that second visit to the United States that the great transformation took place in Stevenson's physical health and men-

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

tal vigor. He suddenly ceased to be sick, and, with the exception of a brief siege during a trip to Australia, he was practically a well man the rest of his life, and his end resulted from something quite unexpected. From the moment of this physical phenomenon his mind became truly as an engine that raced night and day, never skipping, but carrying him onward and upward to that pinnacle where his fame rested, and still rests — secure.

Never was there a more industrious driver of self than during those seven all-too-short winter months. The great words of the Scribner essays flowed from his pen on that old desk

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

in the little hatbox of a room at Saranac. One day an essay; next day a chapter of "Ballantrae"; then a cry for books — reference books! *more books!* Then to tramp in the snow or skate on Moody Pond. Now he comes back, cursing the cold, and bangs the hired piano in his study. Then more essay, or more "Ballantrae"; a discussion with the budding author, Lloyd, about the plot of "The Wrong Box"; then letters to friends; Colvin, Henry James, S. R. Crockett.

And in the evening by the old brick fireplace; perhaps in reverie, conning the lines he wrote there to "the flowers of fire" —

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

“Lo, by the hearth, the laughter of the  
logs —”

or reading “The Tempest” or “Don Quixote” to the family circle, or making smoke wreaths of enchantment in the low-ceiled room.

And here, one night, out of the haze a tale, a mighty tale, emerged. “The idea was Lloyd’s,” he tells Colvin afterward. These two smoke together of the same enchanted brand and the drama is played out in upper air.

Palms and temple bells—and mutiny! Guns roar, women shriek; the fiendish Nana Sahib orders the firing upon the boats at Allahabad; Cawn-

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

pore — the eve of the massacre ; “ the hero is thrown to the ground by one of his own Sepoys and the cries in the Beebeeghar begin,” and — “ the end,” says Stevenson, “ is almost too much for human endurance ! ”

Not a word of it ever got on paper. It was just another enchanted cigarette, smoked to a finish. And I often wonder where vulgarians acquired the term — “ pipe-dream.”

“ Give to me the life I love,” sang the vagabond Stevenson, and after he left Saranac Lake he got it. It was surely a new Stevenson who sang : —

Let the blow fall soon or late,  
Let what will be o'er me ;



## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

Give the face of earth around  
And the road before me.

His was the gypsy life by land and sea from 1888 until 1891, the hunter of the hill, the sailor of the sea, traversing the green jungle, skimming the sapphire lagoon. Now was he living life more than writing about it; so intensely living it that what he did write about it for the New York "Sun" was not, perhaps, on a level with his established literary standard.

But how many enchanted cigarettes must he have smoked under the tropic moon, with the land breeze and the beach smells and the surf-beat playing upon his senses as he lay

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

under the awning aft. That engine which had found its stride at Saranac Lake was tuning up to greater power for the race to come.

Many a tale grew out of his lazy Pacific dreaming, but they were tales he told himself. There was one to be called "The Owl" about which we know nothing but the title. There was another, "The Sleeper Awakened," but R. L. S. himself must have kept on dreaming for all he awoke to write it. And there was a story called "Death in the Pot," about which he says only that it ended in "an ungodly massacre."

Oh, he had great plans, wreathed in

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

smoke! There was to be a tale called "The Shovels of Newton French," of which he said this much later — that Shovel would just have to wait, he and his ancestors, the reason being he has another idea which he proposes to call "Dyce of Ythan." This bit of day-dreaming, he tells us, is to include bonnie Prince Charlie and an earlier appearance of the Master of Ballantrae, "and a love story forbye," and the hero is to be a melancholy young Romeo who marries a young woman who interests the Prince, and Ballantrae fights the hero a duel — and — and, to quote himself, there is the devil to pay!

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

But we never hear another thing about this Mr. Dyce, except that. . . . Here and there throughout Stevenson's fiction — the fiction he wrote, I mean — one discovers that some of the smoke must have got into his hair. Most certainly something of that "Dyce of Ythan" plot may be discerned in a later weed which was half smoked and left in the tray — "The Young Chevalier," wherein the bonnie Prince appears, and Ballantrae ; and a decidedly broad love affair threatens at the breaking-off point.

Then, too, one needs no imagination to perceive how the vapors of another dream, "The Pearl Fisher,"

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

became absorbed in the tale of "The Ebb Tide"—the last that he completed in life. And the first part of "The Ebb Tide" exhales the aroma of still another idea which is on the list of the never-written as "The Beach-Combers." R. L. S. himself admits that the best incident of "The Beach-Combers" was absorbed by that great masterpiece, "Sophia Scarlet." And here we have the odd circumstance of the smoke of one enchanted weed blotting out that of another — castles upon castles in the air; for "Sophia" was never written either. We only know that "Sophia Scarlet" was to contain three ladies

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

—*three*, Mrs. Custer ! — and a dying vanilla planter, who is also a poet, and the first part is sentimental but the second full of rows, winding up with a terrific explosion !

It is sad to think of the vast library that is filled with ghost stories—ghosts *of* stories—and the large niche that is devoted to the Unwritten Novels and Tales of Robert Louis Stevenson. I reach out a shadowy hand and draw forth a transparent volume of Ariel Stevenson entitled “Canonmills” — a love story which its author fears people will think “dreadfully improper.” And my phantom

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

fellow-citizen next door lends me another by the same author, "The Rising Sun," — a novel of "vague and rosy haze." "The Rising Sun," we are told, is the name of a wayside inn where much of the action transpires, but it is a kind of a pun, too, for it tells the story of a rising lad who rises in the estimation of a girl who despised him. A very pretty thing, my ghostly neighbor assures me, but you must put on magic smoked glasses to be able to read a word of it!

At the end of those vagabond wanderings, when Stevenson folded his wings at Vailima, Samoa, it is not sur-

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

prising that his accumulated dreams burst forth in a sudden shower of ink. The year 1893 saw the climax of his amazing fertility of imagination. And this fury of productiveness increased in volume right up to that dark hour which found him in full harness.

During this time he was engaged in three or four novels at one time and still smoking between times. Already he has written and published "The Beach of Falesà" and has started on "The Young Chevalier," having in the mean time discarded a heavy drama of the Scotch Covenanters to be called "Heathercat." Now he has written and published, with Lloyd



## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

Osbourne, "The Wrecker," that most prodigious tale, and stepfather and son are heads-together over "The Ebb-Tide," which Stevenson barely lived to see published.

But, in the mean time, he alone is reaching into the dream-clouds for that masterpiece of sculptured words, "Weir of Hermiston," while he dictates, on the side as it were, "David Balfour," a sequel to "Kidnapped," in which we see the author's vast stride from his first conception of poor, suffering, tired-out Davie and also, in *Catriona*, from his conception of womanhood as quizzed by Mrs. Custer.

Now David has gone to press and

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

again the cigarette is alight. Lo, in the clouds, auld Edinburgh toon, the castle heights and — “St. Ives”; a story that Quiller-Couch was brave enough to finish after another — Andrew Lang, I think — was too reverent to touch it.

For a while he is away adventuring with St. Ives. This tale must not go the way of so many — as smoke in thin air. But “Weir of Hermiston” calls him back; “St. Ives” is set aside; and about this time “Weir” is set aside, too, for there comes yet another dream — yet another story of that Scotland toward which his closing thoughts seem ever leaning. He out-

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

lines eleven chapters, writes two, and — that is the end of “The Go Between,” except that you may buy those twelve written pages to-day for a price quite beyond the average pocket.

“Weir of Hermiston” is the last dear enchanted cigarette that claims him. “St. Ives,” “The Young Chevalier,” “Heathercat,” “The Go Between” — all are half-ends left singing in the tray. He feels that the ring within the ring which makes for story design has been formed. “Weir of Hermiston !”

One cannot conclude without a word of speculation as to the probable

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

ending of this masterpiece. And there is a strange challenge to the superstitious mind here. R. L. S. died on the eve of the day he dictated these words, "It was a wilful convulsion of brute nature" — the last words he gave to the world just before that terrible seizure — "a wilful convulsion of brute nature."

He left us to weave what ending we might out of the fantasy of his last imagining, and there has been a great deal of discussion as to what this ending might have been.

We all know the story — of the harsh Lord Justice Clerk who seemed to delight in sentencing people to be

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

hanged—and the sensitive son who abhorred capital punishment;—the elder Kirstie, a family retainer, who, in robust middle age, thought she loved the lad as a mother might, until she suspected that he had wronged her niece, the younger Kirstie,—Miss Christina,—a vain, pretty thing. We all know how the college friend, Frank Innes, visiting young Weir at Hermiston, was to have been guilty of the dastardly offense and—

Here the “wilful convulsion of brute nature” strikes down Stevenson, and we are left to complete in our own feeble way that which is,

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

even as a fragment, a classic of English fiction.

The popular ending, based, I believe, upon what Stevenson told his amanuensis, is that Archie Weir killed Innes for his crime, and, when arrested for the murder, kept silence in order to protect the younger Kirstie's good name. It is probably true that he was to be brought to trial before, and condemned by, his own father, Lord Hermiston, the Lord Justice Clerk. It is probably true that when the elder Kirstie heard the truth from her niece, that grand woman was to rouse her hot-blooded kinsmen, the Four Black Brothers. We hear their horses clatter

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

in the night ; we see the jail stormed and burst open ; we behold their rescue of the doomed young Weir of Hermiston, and — we are to believe that our hero then flies to America with that little baggage who was not worth the tragedy she created !

This sixpenny novel ending I, for one, cannot accept ; and as Colvin points out in his editorial note to “Weir of Hermiston,” “the plan of every imaginative work is subject to change under the artist’s hand as he carries it out ; and not merely the character of the elder Kirstie, but other elements of the design no less, might well have deviated from the

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

lines originally traced." Certainly Stevenson was too great a craftsman to bring a magnificent drama to a tawdry curtain. In his later novels he was fellow in craft to Thackeray. And this somehow reminds us that, in "Henry Esmond," Thackeray had his young hero, after courting sweet Beatrice all through that great tale, discover himself in time to marry Beatrice's fine, sympathetic mother!

And this is what, perhaps, was to happen at the end of "Weir of Hermiston." I can see the raiders thunder back in the night, bringing young Hermiston home to the elder Kirstie, who has sacrificed all for him—like



## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

a mother! . . . Like the mother that is in every woman for the man she loves.

Instead of devoting a few reminiscent paragraphs to the now elderly Kirstie knitting by the fire and much respected by the neighbors, while a fat chapter is devoted to the Quixotic youth and his Dulcinea flying across the seas — a more romantic, dramatic ending, with the elder Kirstie enha/loed in a glory of rewarded woman/hood, would, I am sure, have sprung from Stevenson's genius.

And the younger Miss Christina? — probably eloped with the King's officer and is now staging down

## *Enchanted Cigarettes*

the Great North Road to London Town.

So we come to the end of our present story, though not, let us hope, to the last of our own enchanted cigarettes. We all smoke them ; some of us, I fear, to our detriment in a world that has little place for dreamers. But surely none will deny us the privilege of nursing our particular dream-child, or of building for them our own castles in the air.

For the dream-child is often the father of greatness.



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